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ASIA EDITION

Japanese-Thai program to fund three projects

July 27, 2012 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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Singapore: Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) have developed a scheme for joint funding of Japanese-Thai cooperative research projects called "Strategic Japanese-Thai Cooperative Program" to strengthen the collaboration in science and technology between Japan and Thailand.

"After discussion between JST and NSTDA, Biotechnology has been selected as the field ofÃ?Â research for which the joint funding scheme will be applied this year. BIOTEC, as a member of NSTDA, is pleased to execute this program on behalf of NSTDA, as it will serve as a vehicle to achieve world-class scientific results, leading towards new innovative technologies," said Dr Kanyawim Kirtikara, executive director, BIOTEC.

Dr Nakamura Michiharu, president, JST stated that "for the 2012 call, JST and BIOTEC agree to fund three bilateral projects, which we plan to support for cooperative research projects including sending and inviting researchers to the counterpart country".

A total of 16 proposals were submitted from 20 academic and research institutes in Japan andÃ?Â Thailand.

One of the projects approved is Identification of genes confer high Fe and Fe toxic tolerance in rice.Ã?Â Led by Dr VinitchanÃ?Â Ruanjaichon from Rice Gene Discovery Unit, BIOTEC, and Prof Dr Naoko Nishizawa from Research Institute for Bioresources and Biotechnology, Ishikawa Prefectural University, the project aims to find a new allele identification of

genes associated with high grain Fe density and tolerance to Fe toxicity which is now a major problem that contributes to the reduction ofÃ?Â rice yields. Such findings will open the way for effective manipulation to breed new riceÃ?Â varieties for high grain Fe density to alleviate Fe-malnutrition problem.

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In the projects DNA chip for identification and typing Mycobacterium tuberculosis using DigiTag platform, Assoc Prof Dr Angkana Chaiprasert from Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University, and Prof Dr Katsushi Tokunaga from Graduate School of Medicine, The University of Tokyo, aim to develop DNA chip for identification and typing M. tuberculosis into different sequence types. The result will benefit TB vaccine development, treatment and control strategies in the future.

The third project is Bacteriophage biocontrol for sustainable crop production: application to bacterial wilt. TheÃ?Â project leaders, Prof Dr Takashi Yamada of Hiroshima University and Dr OrawanÃ?Â Chatchawankanphanich of BIOTEC, plan to use an integrated bacteriophage technology toÃ?Â characterize and develop a detection method for bacteriophages isolated in Thailand. TheÃ?Â findings will lead to stable managements of crop rotation, resistant plant breeds, generalÃ?Â bacterial biocontrol and contribute much to increase in crop yields.

The Strategic Japanese-Thai Cooperative Program was developed under the Memorandum of Understanding between JST and NSTDA in 2009. An important principle of the program is that the collaborations between Thailand and Japan should build on and strengthen on-going research activities in each research group, and the outcome of these should benefit people in both countries.